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A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php

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THE OUTLOOK FOR BIBLE STUDIES IN BIBLE LANDS

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THE subject which has been proposed to me for this paper, is "The outlook for Bible studies in Bible lands." It is certain that the discoveries which have been made during the last thirty years in the various fields of antiquity have considerably modified the views concerning literature. Take, for instance, Homer; the discoveries of Schliemann have completely upset the theories brought forward with a great deal of learning and scholarship by Wolf and others, but resting chiefly on the written text such as it had been preserved by the manuscripts. For we have now the remains of the civilization described by the poet; we see that the poem is not a compound of various documents describing an imaginary civilization without any historical connection. The palaces of the heroes of Homer have been brought to light. We know what their weapons were, we are acquainted with their way of living, and we have recovered part of their treasures. The Troy of the poet has been unearthed, the city before which took place one of the early episodes of the struggle between Europe and Asia, which struggle we still witness in our times.

This great change, this entirely new view of the early history of Greece has been evolved by excavations, by what we call archaeology, by bringing out of the earth, where they had been hidden for centuries, the remains of the epoch described by the poet. And it could then be recognized how completely his language harmonizes with what we can see at Mycenae or in Crete, how the manners and the way of life which he attributes to Ulysses or Agamemnon are not creations of the writer's fancy, but are

the picture of what existed during his life; and all this disposes of the conception of the poems being merely mosaics of fragments of different origin and date put together by late compositors; and leads us to recognize the unity of the writing and the existence of the one author.

The results of excavations have had a similar bearing on the studies of the Old Testament, and the student will be more and more induced to follow the principles of what I may well call the new method, considering how entirely it diverges from the ruling system of Higher Criticism. He will locate a writing in the place where it was written, examining the events to which it was related, its main purport, its occasion, the persons for whom it was intended, and the influence it was calculated to have upon them.

In order to know the circumstances of the epoch in which the author wrote, the environment in which he was moving, the customs of his contemporaries, the excavations alone can give him the necessary information. If we review what has been discovered during the last thirty years, we shall be aware of the great modifications which have been brought in our conception of the early books of the Old Testament. We know much better the circumstances of the time in which Moses wrote and we understand more clearly the character of Moses as a writer.

Curiously enough, the leading discoveries have been made, not in Palestine, but in Mesopotamia and Egypt. Palestine, at present, has not produced any literary document. That which is always considered of first rate importance is the inscription of Siloah; but it is only a text of six lines recording when workmen met, who had been digging a canal from both ends. This, I maintain, cannot give us any indication as to the language used for the sacred writings, still less the ostraca found at Samaria, inscriptions on wine and oil jars. As for the inscription of Mesha, it belongs to a foreign country, Moab; and Mr. Cowley has shown that the language differs from the Hebrew of the Bible; the word which was considered as

the name of Yahveh is the third person of the verb to be, in the Aramaic form.

The calendar of Gezer can hardly be called a literary document; it is intended as an instruction to field labourers.

On the whole, the epigraphic harvest gathered from the excavations in Palestine has been very scanty, and we have learned much more about the country from what has been found in Egypt and elsewhere. It was a capital event in archaeology when in 1887 the fellaheen of Tel el Amarna quite unexpectedly came upon what they said was a jar containing about 300 cuneiform tablets, which were part of the archives of King Amenophis IV. These tablets were not only a correspondence between the Pharaoh and the Kings of Mesopotamia, they were letters and reports of governors and princes of Palestinian cities subject to the king of Egypt: Tyre, Zidon, Megiddo, Ashkelon, Gaza, Jerusalem and others. They revealed a fact absolutely unknown before, that the literary language of Palestine at that time was Babylonian cuneiform, generally called now Akkadian, and that it was strongly permeated with words and forms belonging to the popular language, the dialect of the country. This showed clearly that in antiquity, as at the present day, the inhabitants of a country had two languages: the written language, that of books and writings in general, and a popular dialect or rather dialects, for each of them may have belonged to a very small group, to a city or to a tribe.

Let us consider what exists in our present time. Take a language like German; the written German, the prose which originally was the Saxon dialect of Luther, covers now a considerable part of Europe, from East Prussia to the canton of Berne in Switzerland or to the Southern provinces of Austria. These millions of people, when they write, use the same language. A book, a paper does not differ materially, whether it be printed at Cologne or at Graz. For the Protestants, the Bible is the same at Berlin or at Zurich. But if you listen to the workman in the street or to the labourer in the fields, you will hear a very different language, the popular dialect, of which there are

a considerable number in the wide areas where written German is supreme. Even in a small country like Switzerland, you have a great variety of German dialects. The cattle driver in the Bernese Oberland does not speak like the shepherd on the other side of the mountain, and yet for both of them the official language is German, which is also that of the papers and the books. The same might be said of French and Italian.

The Tel el Amarna tablets, and still more the thousands of tablets coming from the rich libraries of the Mesopotamian cities and from Boghaz Keui near the Black Sea, where a great number of Palestinian documents have been collected, especially of the Amurru (the Amorites)—this enormous literature has shown that in all Western Asia, from the Persian Gulf to the Black Sea including Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine and part of Asia Minor, the literary language of the Semitic nations was Babylonian cuneiform. It began probably with the conquest of Sargon of Agade (2650 B. C.) and lasted until Aramaic appeared in the ninth century B. C. and finally superseded the language written in cuneiform. It is somewhat preposterous to make predictions about the results of excavations; but it is not unreasonable to say that our knowledge of Western Asia in antiquity will be best furthered by the discovery and by an exhaustive study of the contents of the magnificent libraries formed by the Mesopotamian kings, and in which they collected a multitude of documents concerning not only their own country, but also those with which they had been connected, either by conquest or by friendly intercourse or trade. It is quite possible that in one of them may appear writings coming from inhabitants of Jerusalem or from its temple.

And also we shall come to a better understanding of books like those of the Old Testament; we shall get a more correct picture of the writers and of their way of constructing and drawing up their writings. For instance, only a few weeks ago, the Père Scheil brought out the translation of Assyrian laws which are written on several tablets coming from the old city of Assur. This seems to have been the original form of the laws of Moses.

Certainly in Mesopotamia the outlook seems to be much more favourable than in Palestine; nevertheless, we may look forward to the results of the excavations which are going to be carried on, on a great scale in various places and have begun at Askalon. Cuneiform tablets are not scattered here and there; they are generally gathered together in a jar or in a box. It was so at Tel el Amarna; and, who knows, a fortunate explorer may come across a finding of the same kind, which suddenly will throw a flood of light on the past.

We owe to Egypt another discovery of the utmost importance, the papyri of Elephantine written in Aramaic, and which may be called a literature, since they consist of writings of various kinds, private and official, and of what we should call in our time works of fiction, like the story of Ahigar. We learn from a letter to Bagoas, the Persian governor of Palestine, that under the Egyptian kings, which means the Saite dynasty, the Jews had built a temple, in which they had established the worship of their God Iaho or Iahou, and that this temple, spared by Cambyses, had been wantonly destroyed by the Egyptian priests. The settlement of Elephantine was several centuries earlier than the letter to Bagoas. It went back to the time when the Jews fled in great numbers to Egypt in spite of the warnings of the prophets. Elephantine was one of the five cities which, according to Isaiah (XIX, 18) will speak "the language of Canaan"; and since at Elephantine it is Aramaic, which was not the language of Egypt, it is clear that the Jews must have brought their language as well as their worship; and this shows that after Babylonian cuneiform the language of Palestine had become Aramaic; it had passed through the same evolution as in Mesopotamia.

Egypt is the land of papyri. It has enriched considerably Greek literature and the stock of these documents seems far from being exhausted. We frequently see collections of these precious rolls being discovered, and it is not unreasonable to hope that some day a copy of the LXX may be found, which, not being very remote from

the time when this translation was made, will bring much valuable information as to the text of the O. T.

Undoubtedly, since excavations will now be possible in all Bible lands, and since they will be carried on not merely to fill up museums with rare objects, but in the interest of science, we can look forward to important results, and the outlook is certainly promising in this respect.

But there is another field which till quite recently has been approached from an entirely one-sided point of view, and which, if considered in a different light, will lead to some important modifications in the judgments passed on the composition of the Old Testament. I mean the method and the principles on which are based the studies of dates, authors, and the authenticity of these venerable books.

Here we must leave aside entirely the theological point of view; we must not consider the religious value which these books have for us. Let us study them as any other document which antiquity has left us, like Homer, or some of the works of the Middle Ages, and apply to them the same principle. Let us listen to what they say and not to what they ought to say according to the interpretation which we give them. Here we immediately come in conflict with a method which pretends to rule beyond contest the research on the books of Scripture, and to fix once for all the direction they have to follow. I mean Higher Criticism and its claim to be infallible. And this is no unjust aspersion which I throw on its character. I have only to consult its leaders, such as, for instance, one of its most eager apostles in America, the late Dr. Briggs, who describes it in the following way: "The Higher Criticism has vindicated its rights in the field of biblical study as well as in all other kinds of literature. It matters little who may oppose its source, what combinations may be brought against it; it will advance steadily and irresistibly to its results, it will flow on every obstacle like a mighty river and bury every obstruction beneath its waves. In time it will give a final decision to all the literary problems of Holy Scripture. No other voice can decide them. Men may for a time refuse to listen to its

voice, they may try to deaden it by a chorus of outcries and shoutings of opposition. But Higher Criticism is in no haste, she can wait. She does not seek the favour of ecclesiastics or the applause of the populace. She seeks the truth, and having won the truth, she is sure of the everlasting future."¹

Dr. Briggs says also that Biblical Criticism has derived from other branches of criticism the principles and methods of its work. We are therefore entitled to look into those other branches to know whether these principles and methods are maintained, and whether they still dominate the historical researches.

Here we find that, following a French historian who died in 1890, Fustel de Coulanges, there is now in France a school of critics which starts from quite different principles and arrives at results which positively contradict those of Higher Criticism. The most eminent representatives of this school are in the French Academy: Mr. Camille Jullian, the author of the now classical History of Gaul; Mr. Bédier, who, in his studies on poems of the Middle Ages, overthrew the theories of the brothers Grimm; besides, Mr. Bérard, the great authority on Homeric criticism; also lawyers who, on the question of the XII Tables and other questions of Roman history oppose the conclusions of Niebuhr and Mommsen; I might add several others, for their number is growing.

It seems to me that the studies on Scripture have to be based on the principles of that school. They constitute the sound historical method against Higher Criticism, which holds a quite different view of the old document, and where the written text is superseded by constructions or interpretations which are considered as established facts.

The fundamental principle on which the school bases its conclusions is: that we must take the texts such as they have written, in their proper and literal sense, and interpret them as simply as possible. We have to admit them ingenuously, without mixing with them our personal views. We have to listen to the texts and accept

¹Briggs: *The Study of Holy Scripture*, p. 108.

what they say, though perhaps they do not agree with modern ideas or with the logical rules which the scholars of the present day do not hesitate to enforce upon them.

Let us now apply this principle to the beginning of the Old Testament. The first chapter, like the whole book of Genesis, is anonymous; it is not said that Moses was its author; we know it only through tradition, but we shall see further that the tradition agrees exactly with the time, the character and the environment of Moses. The first chapter says that Elohim, a name corresponding to our word God, created the world in six days, the work of each of these days is briefly described. The last is the creation of man, made "in God's image," and who was to have dominion over all living creatures. But this does not imply any special position of man towards God; a moral element does not yet appear in the narrative, and in the verse which sums up the work of creation, and which is wrongly considered as the title of the second chapter; "These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created," he is no more mentioned than the animals.

But as man was the crowning of creation, everything concerning him will now be narrated and described: the manner in which he was formed, as well as Eve, the picture of their first abode and their intercourse with God, which began with the fall. For this it is necessary to locate him, to indicate his place in creation and the more so since we have before us a tablet which is not linked to the former as a chapter to another in a book. It is necessary to revert to what has been said in the first tablet, in order to understand the narrative. According to Olivetan, the first French translator of the Bible, it is said that God *had* formed man of the dust of the ground, that He *had* put the man in the garden of Eden, that He *had* said: It is not good that the man should be alone and therefore He *had* brought before Adam all the animals among which we may suppose that there were all the anthropoid apes; and since Adam could not find an helpmeet for him, God created her in a different way. From there the facts follow each other historically, with the

greatest simplicity, and there is absolutely no reason to suppose that this tablet is not of the same author as the first, of which it is the natural and logical outcome.

This second tablet teaches us a fundamental truth on which the religion and history of Israel are based: God has two names: Elohim, which is the divine person in its general name, as we say God; and Yahveh, who is God specially considered in His dealings with men. Yahveh is the God of man; He makes an alliance with man; He shows him His power and His mercy. But Yahveh is the same as Elohim the creator of the universe; and in order to state it solemnly from the moment of man's creation, Moses calls God by His two names: Yahveh Elohim. Either of them will henceforth be employed, but in the intercourse with man, Yahveh is preferably used. Yahveh having made an alliance with Abraham, has become the national God of the Hebrews. But the use of one of the names is not ruled by a law fixing exactly the cases in which each of them has to be employed. Very often it depends on personal feeling or it comes indifferently on the speaker's lips.

Thus we read in the first four chapters of Genesis that Elohim created the world in six days; afterwards the creation of Adam and Eve is described in detail their first intercourse with God and the fall. The God of man has two names, Elohim and Yahveh. Yahveh, who appears as soon as man is created, is the same as Elohim. This fundamental truth is expressed from the outset, at the beginning of the history of man. The whole narrative is very simple, its sequence is quite normal, and there is no reason whatever preventing us from accepting it as it is, as the work of an author who has to relate the origin of the world and of mankind.

Here the critics tell us that the appearance of the text is fallacious, its outward unity is unreal. These chapters, they say, are the work of five different authors. The first, the creation, is the beginning of a historical and juridical book now called the Priestly Code, which is the work of a school of priests who framed the legislation of the temple after the return from the exile. This chapter cannot

be earlier than the fifth century. The three following belong to the Yahvist, the author so called because he makes use exclusively of the name of Yahveh. This author is of Judaic origin and must have lived in the ninth century. There is an older Yahvist to whom we owe the list of the posterity of Cain. Since the Yahvist uses only the name Yahveh, he cannot have said that God had a double name, he cannot have written these two words *Yahveh Elohim*, which we find through all the second and third chapter, except of course in the mouth of the serpent. The text is manifestly incorrect; the word Elohim following Yahveh is an interpolation by the latest of the authors, who is called the redactor, an unknown writer of the fourth century who collected and compiled all the fragments of which the books of Moses and Joshua are formed. For Genesis alone there are 264. The redactor gave to the books their outward unity. He supplements his documents from his own information.

I maintain that the unity given to the books in this way is merely outward, for there are inner discrepancies which seriously impair the value of the book such as it has been reconstructed by the critics. The Yahvist uses the name of Yahveh from the beginning of the history of mankind. But owing to the interpretation which they give of Exodus VI. 3, the critics maintain as a well established fact that the name of Jehovah, Yahveh, was revealed "unquestionably for the first time" to Moses at the time of the Exodus. What are we then to think of the Yahvist, who throughout the book of Genesis, and especially in the history of Abraham, uses only the name of Yahveh? Abraham has no other God. It is with Yahveh that the alliance is concluded, which sanctions his election and that of his posterity. But the Elohist who writes a century after the Yahvist, says, according to the critics, that this is all fancy, since Abraham never knew the name of Yahveh. The critics call that a mere divergence of points of view between the writers; we call it a positive contradiction of the gravest kind. Either Abraham knew the name of Yahveh, or he did not. There is no middle

¹Kuenen: *The Hexateuch*, p. 56.

way. If, as you say, Abraham did not know Yahveh, then there is no alliance, no election of the patriarch and of his posterity. The whole of his biography rests on a false assumption. Take Yahveh out of Abraham's life, what does remain? You have laid the axe unto the root of the tree of Israel.

The description of the first chapters of Genesis is sufficient to show how the critics look upon the text, and how wide is the gulf which separates them from us. Let us now briefly consider the method which leads them to such results.

I need not revert to the origin of Higher Criticism, to Astruc and Eichhorn, who stated that Genesis consists of various documents, parts of which were copied by Moses who compiled Genesis. The two principal documents are the Elohist, who uses constantly the name of Elohim, and the Yahvist, who uses the name of Yahveh. The difference between the two writers is mainly that of the two names of God. Except Genesis and the two first chapters of Exodus, the rest of the Pentateuch is entirely the work of Moses; he relates the events of which he was a witness or in which he took part. Though the modern critics constantly speak with admiration of Astruc's discovery, they have entirely rejected his conclusions. Nothing in the Pentateuch is the writing of Moses. All its component documents are of much later date, and they do not admit the old characteristic of the Elohist and the Yahvist, since the difference in the use of the names is not the same in the LXX as in the Hebrew text. For instance, the first chapter of Genesis, which is Elohist in form, and should at first sight be attributed to the Ephraimite writer of the eighth century, is post exilic, it belongs to the Priestly Code.

The method of the critics consists in dismembering the text entirely, and showing it, not as the work of a single author, the date and name of whom are given by tradition or by the text itself, but as a construction made with fragments belonging to authors of very different epochs and origins, the existence of whom is asserted with the same assurance as that of Thucydides or Livy. We have

therefore not to take into consideration what the four books following Genesis say, that they are the words of Moses, and sometimes his writing.

Astruc's idea that the difference in the name of God implied different authors is merely an explanation of that difference, a supposition which is personal to him. It is not an established fact, and still less so for the system of the critics in the analysis which they have made of the Pentateuch. Their principle is this: there are several authors; and it must be so because the text does not agree with what we have a right to require from an author. We find there what we call contradictions, useless repetitions, chronological difficulties which prevent us from believing in the unique author. The number of those supposed authors varies according to critics, each one may put forward an idea which justifies the assumption of an author, the existence of whom cannot be discussed and is an established historical fact. If the text does not agree with the views of the critics, it is the text which is wrong, it must be corrected.

The general expression of this principle is the following: in the study of a document, what is the ruling authority is not what the document says, but the idea or the theory which it calls forth in the mind of the student. This only is indisputable, it will be the test from which the document will be judged. And the document will have to comply with it at any cost; therefore it will be necessary to adjust it, to purify it of all interpolations, to put aside certain parts and to extol other ones. Thus the logical order in the study of the Old Testament has been entirely reversed. The plurality of authors of various epochs is not the necessary conclusion derived from the composition of the book and the circumstances in which it was written. It is strange to say, the starting point, the preconceived idea, according to which the document will be judged. From the outset, unity of authorship is excluded. By all means various authors must be discovered, writing each on his point of view, in different localities, sometimes at very distant dates; and this even in a narrative which unfolds itself in the most natural

way, without any stumbling block, and which disagrees entirely with the conception of the critics. This will not disturb them. It is one of those obstacles which, as Dr. Briggs says, "the mighty river of Higher Criticism buries beneath its waves."

Since there is not the slightest outward proof of the existence of those authors, they are all of them literary creations; they vary considerably in number according to the views of the critics, and thus the literature of the Old Testament is nothing but an artificial creation due to a multitude of supposed authors of a kind unknown to the Israelites, and whose character and activity absolutely disagree with their time and environment.

This is the result of the method of Higher Criticism. It is entirely based, not on the text, but on the interpretation which occurs to the critics and which occasionally influences the text and involves its being adjusted to the idea of the critic. We see therefore that it is in direct opposition to what I call the sound historical method, the first principle of which I feel bound to repeat: We must take the texts such as they have been written, in their proper and literal sense, and interpret them as simply as possible, without mixing with them our personal views.¹

We have now to state a second principle from which we shall derive much enlightenment and a much better understanding of the documents which we consider. We must replace a book in the time in which the author lived and examine the events as well as the places to which they were related.

How did a writer of the time of Moses do his work? We must first discard an idea which has led astray many scholars. He did not write a book. The book, the product of the mind, an independent creation made for itself on a definite plan, in view of readers,—this is an attainment which is unknown to Moses and even to the prophets. Scripture is only the reproduction of what has been said

¹This principle, viz.: to take the texts as they are and not as they ought to be, inspires the two admirable books lately published by Dr. Kyle on the Pentateuch. Following a somewhat different line of argument, he comes to a conclusion identical to mine: the unity of the Pentateuch, of which Moses is the author.

and perhaps repeated before. In all the writings of Moses, except perhaps some of the genealogies, there is nothing which has not been spoken at first; it may be even several times and put down afterwards either by Moses himself or one of his hearers. Therefore the language of Moses is the spoken word which is not bound by the rules of the book. No wonder that the critics should find irregularities, repetitions, disorder, which cannot be admitted in the book, but which are common in the spoken language. Even in book writers like Thucydides or Plutarch, a tradition remains of this first purpose of scripture. They speak only of their hearers and not of their readers, for which there is no word in Greek.

What Moses has left is wrongly called books; it is only a collection of tablets written at various times, some of them perhaps in Egypt, but probably most of them during the long journey across the desert. It is certainly so for the law, a spoken law, proclaimed to the ears of the Israelites and put down afterwards, that it might last for the future generations. This is why it has such an incoherent form, so different from what a code of laws would be. The repetitions are not always to the same people, and as we see in Deuteronomy, sometimes he quotes by heart what he has said before, sometimes he looks at his tablets.

These tablets, as the excavations have taught us, could be written only in Babylonian cuneiform, the only literary language which the Semites had in their time. Moses, a Semitic writer, wrote on clay tablets, and as we learn from Deuteronomy, the collection of these tablets was entrusted to the Levites who bore the Ark of the Covenant; they had to put it by the side of the Ark. This seems to indicate that, as was usual with cuneiform tablets, they were laid in a box or in a jar which was carried with the ark.

Let us see how wonderfully the composition of the Pentateuch agrees with the customs of the time of Moses, and the circumstances in which he was writing. He could only write on tablets. Are not these five books an evident collection of tablets without the link which binds together the chapters of a book, and written without a defi-

nite plan, on the spur of the moment and circumstances? No wonder that the critics, who applied to them the exigencies to which a book, in our sense, has to submit, found therein nothing but a promiscuous mixture, which they could only disentangle by the admission of numerous authors!

We have also to notice the great number of facts or words which record the man who knew Egypt well and who even had access to the court. We find many allusions to the political state of Egypt, or to customs peculiar to the country, which a Palestinian writer of the ninth century, and still less of the fifth, could not possibly know. It is the eye-witness and the leader of the Israelites who describes the passage of the Red Sea.

Moses may have put together some of his tablets; but the division in five books is clearly of later time; and here I do not hesitate to follow the Jewish tradition. It was the work of Ezra. Cuneiform had been superseded by Aramaic, a language and a script which could be written with pen and ink on any material like papyrus or skin. Ezra, the ready scribe of Babylon, did what was usual for those who had the same profession; he turned the cuneiform tablets of Moses into Aramaic and collected them in books. That there was an Aramaic version of the Old Testament in the time of the Christian era, seems to me proved by the fact that our Lord, on the cross, quotes the 22nd psalm in Aramaic.

Lastly, I believe that there is one point to notice, which the critics have entirely left aside. I maintain that in a book like Genesis, or the Pentateuch in general, we are bound to consider it in relation to its main purpose, its occasion, the persons for whom it was intended, and the influence it is calculated to have upon them. And this, undoubtedly, is what often leads us most certainly to recognize, not only the authenticity, but the unity of thought and authorship.

This is particularly striking in Genesis, the book which has been cut up by the critics in 264 fragments due to several authors, the most important of whom are three, belonging to the ninth, the eighth and the fifth century,

besides the Redactor who put all these fragments together and who is the real author of the book in the fourth century. If now we look at its contents, we find a particularly striking unity of thought. It is written for a definite purpose. It is the collection of the teachings of Moses to the people, showing them that they were the elect, that God had chosen them for His people and had given them a special mission which could be carried out in Canaan only. They had therefore to leave Egypt and take possession of the country which had been promised to their father Abraham.

Genesis is the necessary introduction to the Law, and it must have been written before or about the time of the departure. It was no easy task to induce the Israelites to leave Egypt, where they were persecuted, but where for many generations they had been prosperous. Another king might be more humane, their condition might be better. It was most imperative to Moses to show them the nature of his authority, to bring home to them that they were called to a special place and function. He had to revive in them the recognition of their inheritance from their great ancestor and of the destiny which had been promised them as his descendants. In Genesis, everything converges towards this central idea, the election of Israel and its pressing duty to take possession of Canaan where the worship of Yahveh would be established. Genesis is, as it may be called, the deeds of nobility of Israel, or, as Dean Wace puts it: the Magna Charta of the Jewish nation; and the time when the nation commenced an independent life under Moses was the unique moment for its composition. What we read in Genesis is the only language which could persuade the Israelites to follow their leader on an expedition through a wilderness to a land as yet unknown to them, and Moses alone had the necessary authority to hold that language.

Let us now look at the Genesis of the critics. It did not exist before the fourth century. There were various documents relating the events which are found in the book, but these documents were scattered and had very different origins and dates. In the fourth century, an

unknown man, who evidently was interested in the history of his people, imagined to make with these documents what we should call a student's book, relating the origin of Israel until it became a people. He collected those documents, cut fragments here and there, which he copied and occasionally supplemented or corrected. He made out a texture of which we cannot recognize the nature and the purpose. It is not a literary work, for it has no regular plan; it is not history, since the chronological order is not always followed.

Who was this redactor? Did he live in Palestine, or in Egypt? What was his name, and what was his intention in writing the book? He was not a prophet; he did not repeat what Yahveh had commanded him to say. What kind of influence did he hope to exert on his countrymen? They were then in a very low state; they were fighting hard with the Syrian kings in the hope of saving what remained of their independence. Was it the moment to let them hear such words as these: "Arise! walk through the land in the length of it and the breadth of it; for unto thee will I give it." Would not the glorious promises of Yahveh to Abraham have seemed to the people like a cruel mockery? And would they not turn away from a God who had left all His promises unfulfilled?

If we apply our principle to the Genesis of the critics, if we replace it in the time when they say it has been written, if we consider to whom it is destined, we cannot but come to the conclusion that it is a book without any "raison d'être"; it is aimless and useless, and could only induce readers to turn away from Yahveh and from his words.

Upon the whole, the method which we follow is not merely philological; it looks to other branches of knowledge, where it will find support for its conclusions. First to archaeology, to excavations, especially in Bible lands; it has also to consult anthropology, ethnology, and occasionally natural sciences. And this seems to me the outlook in the researches on the books of Scripture: taking the texts as they are and listening to what they say, and

interpreting them, not by our personal views or by grammatical subtleties, but by a more complete knowledge of the time when the books were written, and of the people to whom they were directed, I have no doubt that researches following these lines will lead to important and standing results.